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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) Grant Program

(last updated March 2014)

PROGRAM GOAL

The overall goal of the Strategic Growth Initiative Grant Program is to increase the economic impact of the Food and Agriculture Industry in Michigan.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This initiative has been developed to focus on removing existing barriers and leveraging opportunities identified by food processors, agri-business, and those in agricultural production as critical to business development and growth. Projects should identify ways to validate new and improved innovations for emerging issues and allow for the sharing of information to benefit the industry and stakeholders.

The funding for SGI will be distributed via a request for proposal (RFP) and evaluated through a two-step process.

All communications concerning this RFP should be sent via e-mail to:
mda-grants@michigan.gov.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Applications for funding should describe how the project impacts the Michigan food and agriculture industry. The project must produce measurable outcome(s) for the growth of the food and agriculture industry and/or the public, rather than a single organization or individual.

Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization or individual. Awards are a maximum amount of \$200,000, and only one proposal per applicant will be considered.

Each grantee will be required to identify program outcomes and performance metrics that contribute to the industry's five goals:

- increasing the economic impact of the food and agriculture industry
- increasing agriculture exports
- increasing food and agricultural jobs
- improving access to healthy foods
- increasing sustainable food and agriculture systems

MDARD will be measuring and reporting on the economic impact, job creation and innovation of this program.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY

- **Agricultural Cooperative:** A group-owned or member-owned entity or business that provides, offers, or sells agricultural products or services for the mutual benefit of the members thereof.
- **Producer Network:** A producer group- or member-owned organization or business that provides, offers, or sells agricultural products or services through a common distribution system for the mutual benefit of the members thereof.
- **Producer Associations:** An organization or other business that assists, serves, or represents producers or a producer network.
- **Nonprofit Corporation:** Any organization or institution defined by Michigan Public Act 162 of 1982.
- **Business Entities:** An organization as defined by Michigan Public Act 23 of 1993, who is in good standing with the state of Michigan and whose primary function involves the production, processing or marketing of Michigan grown agricultural products.
- **Economic Development Organizations:** An organization whose mission is the improvement, maintenance, development and/or marketing or promotion of a specific geographic area.
- **Educational Institutions:** Institutions of higher education and/or research institutions and service providers.

Program Process

Eligible applicants will be required to submit an abstract on established dates to be determined. These dates and program guidelines will be on the MDARD Website.

Abstracts will be evaluated by an internal MDARD team. Within 30 days of submission, a determination will be made whether applicants will be invited to provide a full application. Abstracts are limited to two-pages, 12 point Arial font with one inch margins. One page of the abstract is to be narrative, and the second page must be the completed budget worksheet that is provided. The grant abstract is a concise summary of the project, and should describe every major aspect of the project. The abstract should contain the following information:

- Brief (clear and concise) background of the opportunity or problem to be solved
- Why is the project important or necessary
- Who is responsible for the work to be done and what partners are involved
- How is the project innovative; and what (if any), barriers to growth could be impacted by the completion of the project

The abstract template is available on the MDARD Website at www.michigan.gov/mdard.

Specific documents, requirements and instructions regarding project proposals will be included in the Invitation to Submit Proposals notification.

- Applicants will have a predetermined amount of time to submit their full proposal.
- Applicants will also be required to make a 10 minute presentation in-person to the Grant Review Committee at their next scheduled meeting in Lansing.
- The Grant Review Committee meetings will be conducted in April 2015 and June 2015. The Review Committee is chaired by the MDARD Director. At the conclusion of the Grant Review Team meeting recommendations would be made to the Director for final decisions.

This grant is a cost reimbursement program. Each grantee will be required to submit written reports, invoices and copies of paid receipts to MDARD for payment. All applicants must be registered as a vendor in the Contracts and Payments System with the State of Michigan. Please register: www.cpexpress.state.mi.us

Grant funds **cannot** be used to pay for the acquisition of land or the purchase, construction, or structural repair of a building or facility.

Indirect costs are **not** allowable under this grant program. Indirect costs are defined as the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified within the project, but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the implementation proposal related activities.

MDARD reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to reject an application if it:

- ✓ Does not meet the mandates including scope, eligibility, and allowable grant fund use
- ✓ Is received after the deadline
- ✓ Is incomplete or missing any of the required forms, narrative, and budget
- ✓ Does not follow the outlined application requirements

Additionally, an application will be rejected (after submission or prior to award) if information comes to MDARD's attention that:

- ✓ It has been determined an organization is ineligible for an award
- ✓ The application is materially misleading or incorrect
- ✓ Indicates fraud or mismanagement of federal or state funds by the organization